

What Is Claimed Is:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

plural image forming units which form visible images
5 of different colors by making developers of different
colors adhere to image holders electrostatically,;

a belt transfer member which lies in contact with
image holders for the different colors to transfer the
developers adhering to the image holders of the image
10 forming units thereto and make the transferred images
overlap each other; and

intermediate transfer electrode members, located
opposite to the image holders of the image forming units
with the belt transfer member between the electrode
15 members and the carriers, to which transfer voltage is
applied to transfer images electrostatically from the
image forming units to the belt transfer member in sequence
and make the transferred images overlap each other,

wherein each of the plural intermediate transfer
20 electrode members is located on a belt surface away from
a point at which a corresponding image holder contacts
the belt.

2. The image forming apparatus according to Claim
25 1, wherein the plural intermediate transfer electrode
members are located on the belt transfer member downstream
from the points at which the image holders contact the

belt.

3. The image forming apparatus according to Claim
1, wherein the most upstream intermediate transfer
5 electrode member is located upstream from the point at
which the most upstream image holder contacts the belt,
and the most downstream intermediate transfer electrode
member is located downstream from the point at which the
most downstream image holder contacts the belt.

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4. The image forming apparatus according to Claim
1, further comprising:

a medium transfer electrode member which applies
transfer voltage to the belt transfer member in order
15 to transfer overlapping, transferred visible images to
a recording medium such as paper at a time;

a backup roller which is located opposite to the
medium transfer electrode member with the belt transfer
member between them;

20 a tension roller which is located between the drive
roller and the backup roller to apply tension to the belt
transfer member; and

an electrical isolation structure which
electrically isolates the intermediate transfer
25 electrode members and the image holders, which are in
contact with the belt transfer member, from the medium
transfer electrode member.

5. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein in the electrical isolation structure, the drive roller and the backup roller are electrically floating, the tension roller is electrically grounded, and there is an electrically grounded grounding roller opposite to a cleaning member located between the backup roller and an adjacent image holder with the belt transfer member between the cleaning member and the grounding roller.

6. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein the tension roller is almost at the midpoint between the drive roller and the backup roller.

7. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the following relation exists between a number m of the image holders and a number n of the intermediate transfer electrode members: $n < m$, and $n \geq 1$.

8. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein a surface resistance of the belt transfer member is in a range from $5 \times 10^8 \Omega/\square$ to $5 \times 10^{10} \Omega/\square$.

9. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the intermediate transfer electrode member is made of metal.

10. The image forming apparatus according to Claim
1, wherein the intermediate transfer electrode member
is a metal roller, a metal brush, a metal sheet, a metal
5 shaft, a metal block, a metal plate or a metal blade.

11. An imaging method comprising:

an image forming step of forming visible images of
different colors by making developers of different colors
10 adhere to image holders electrostatically; and

an intermediate transfer step of sequentially
transferring the different color images adhering to the
plural image holders onto a belt transfer member
electrostatically and making the transferred images
15 overlap each other,

wherein, at the intermediate step, transfer voltage
is applied on a belt surface at places away from points
at which the image holders contact the belt.